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Chambers

Poems



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George Boyd, Esq.

with the author's

kind regards.

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P O E M S,

BY ROBERT CHAMBERS.

Nec cithara carente.

EDINBURGH,

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*In presenting this little volume to his friends, the author
deems it only necessary to state, that it contains nearly the
whole of the versified compositions which he has ever written.*

P O E M S.

THE GRAVE OF THE MISANTHROPE.*

I sat upon the hermit's grave ;
'Twas on a smiling summer's day,
When all around the gloomy spot
Was brightened by the skies of May.
In undistinguished lowliness
I found the little mound of earth,
And bitter weeds o'ergrew the place,
As if his heart had given them birth,
And they from thence their nurture drew,—
In such rank luxury they grew.

No friendship to his grave had lent
Such rudely sculptured monument,
As marked the peasant's place of rest ;

* This poem relates to David Ritchie, a deformed and eccentric panper, who, for many years previous to 1811, dwelt in a solitary cottage in the vale of Mannor, near Peebles, and is allowed by Sir Walter Scott to have been the prototype of the fictitious character of the Black Dwarf. With an intellect of considerable native strength, and by no means uncultivated, this poor hater of his kind had a superstitious veneration for the mountain ash, or rowan-tree, and his grave in Mannor churchyard is marked by a plant of that species.

For he, the latest of his race,
 Had left no friend behind, to trace
 Such frail memorial o'er his breast.
 But near his head a sapling waved
 The honours of its slender form,
 And in its loneliness had braved
 The autumn blast, the winter storm.
 Some friendly hand the tribute gave,
 To mark the undistinguished grave,
 That, drooping o'er that sod, it might
 Repay a world's neglectful scorn,
 And, catching sorrow from the night,
 There weep a thousand tears at morn.

It was an emblem of himself,
 A mateless, solitary thing,
 To which no circling season might
 An hour of greener gladness bring ;
 A churchyard desert was its doom,
 Its parent soil a darkling tomb ;
 Such was the Solitary's fate,
 So joyless and so desolate ;
 For, blasted soon as it was given,
 His was the life that knew no hope,
 His was the heart that knew no heaven :—
 Then, stranger, by one pitying drop,
 Forgive, forgive the Misanthrope !

1821.

SONG,

IN THE MANNER OF THE POETS OF THE REIGN OF CHARLES I.

Such thoughts as fairies dream,
Beside the haunted stream,
By moon-lit woods and solitudes,
Where nought of man may seem ;

So bright as angels are,
When seen at morn afar,
In beauty laid on a golden bed,
Beneath the fading star ;

Pure as that drop and true,
Where mimic forms we view,
So small, so bright, so exquisite—
A fairy world of dew !

Such thoughts, such beauty bright,
Such pureness exquisite
To her belong, of whom this song
My heart and harp indite.

POLLY PARTAN,

A BALLAD.

O, pretty Polly Partan ! she was a damsel gay,
And, with a creel upon her back, she every night would stray
To the market-cross of Edinburgh, where singing she would stand,
While the gayest lords in Edinburgh ate oysters from her hand.

Oh, such a beauty Polly was, she dang the fish-wives a'—
Her cheek was like the partan's back, her nose was like its claw !
Oh how divinely did she look, when to her cheek there cam'
The blushes that accompany the taking of a dram !

Her love he was a sailor, a sailor on the sea,
And of a Greenland whaler the second mate was he :
But the Northern Sea now covers him beneath its icy wave,
And the ice-berg is the monument that lies upon his grave.

As pretty Polly Partan one night was going home,
And thinking of Tam Hallibuck and happy days to come,
Endeavouring to recollect if she was fou or not,
And counting that night's profits in her kilted petticoat.

She had not gone a mile, a mile down the Newhaven road,
When the spirit of Tam Hallibuck before poor Polly stood ;
The hiccup rose unhiccuped through her amazed throat,
And the shilling dropt uncounted into her petticoat.

Oh, cold turned Polly Partan, but colder was the ghost,
 Who shivered in his shirt, as folks are apt to do in frost:
 And while from out his cheek he spat the phantom of a quid,
 From the ghost of his tobacco-box he lifted off the lid.

“ Oh! Polly,” cried the spirit, “ you may weep nae mair for me,
 For my body it lies cauld and deep beneath the frozen sea;
 Oh! will you be my bride, and go where sleeps your ain true lover,
 The tangle-weed shall be your bed, the mighty waves its cover?”

“ Oh, yes, I’ll go!” cried Polly, “ for I can lo’e nane but you;”
 And she turn’d into a spirit, and away with Tam she flew:
 And in her track, far to the north, a ghastly light there shone,
 Her *coats* were like the comet’s tail, her fish-creel like the moon.

And some folk about Buckhaven, that were lecturing that night
 On th’ aurora borealis and its beauties all so bright,
 Saw the spiritual lovers, with the lightning’s quickest motion,
 Shoot down among the streamers like two stars into the ocean.

1821.

TO THE EVENING STAR.

Soft star of eve, whose trembling light
 Gleams through the closing eye of day,
 Where clouds of dying purple bright
 Melt in the shades of eve away,

And mock thee with a fitful ray,
 Pure spirit of the twilight hour,
 Till forth thou blazeth to display
 The splendour of thy native power.

'Twas thus, when earth from chaos sprung,
 The smoke of forming worlds arose,
 And, o'er thine infant beauty hung,
 Hid thee awhile in dark repose ;
 Till the black veil dissolved away,
 Drunk by the universal air,
 And thou, sweet star, with lovely ray,
 Shone out on paradise so fair,

When the first eve the world had known
 Fell blissfully on Eden's bowers,
 And earth's first love lay couched upon
 The dew of Eden's fairest flowers ;
 Then thy first smile in heaven was seen
 To hail the birth of love divine,
 And ever since that smile hath been
 The sainted passion's hallowed shrine :
 Can lover yet behold thy beam
 Unmoved, unpassioned, unrefined ?—
 While there thou shin'st the brightest gem,
 To Night's cerulean crown assigned.

Since then how many gentle eyes
 That love and thy pure ray made bright,
 Have gazed on thee with blissful sighs—
 Now veiled in everlasting night !
 Oh, let not love or youth be vain
 Of present bliss, and hope more high ;
 The stars,—the very clods remain—
 Love, they, and all of theirs must die.

Now throned upon the western wave,
 Thou tremblest coyly, star of love !
 And dip'st beneath its gleamy heave
 Thy silver foot, the bath to prove.
 And though no power thy course may stay,
 Which Nature's changeless laws compel,
 To thee a thousand hearts shall say—
 Sweet star of love, farewell, farewell !

1821.

✠

MY NATIVE BAY.

My native bay is calm and bright,
 As e'er it was of yore,
 When, in the days of hope and love,
 I stood upon its shore !

The sky is glowing, soft and blue,
As once in youth it smiled,
When summer seas and summer skies
Were always bright and mild.

The sky—how oft hath darkness dwelt,
Since then, upon its breast ;
The sea—how oft have tempests woke
Its billows from their rest !
So oft hath darker woe come o'er
Calm self-enjoying thought ;
And passion's storm a wilder scene
Within my bosom wrought.

Now, after years of absence, pass'd
In wretchedness and pain,
I come, and find those seas and skies
All calm and bright again.

* The darkness and the storm from both
Have trackless pass'd away ;
And gentle as in youth, once more
Thou seem'st, my native bay !

Oh, that, like thee, when toil is o'er,
And all my griefs are past,
This ravaged bosom might subside
To peace and joy at last !

And while it lay all calm like thee,
 In pure unruffled sleep,
 Might then a heaven as bright as this
 Be mirror'd in its deep !

1823.

CUSTOMER WARK.*

I.

In Ettrick's old vale, where the heather grows green,
 Wi' aye here and there a bit plantin' between,
 There lives an auld wabster, within an auld shiel,
 As lang, and mechancy, and black as the deil.
 He works e'en and morn for his wife and his weans,
 Till the very flesh seems to be wrought frae his banes ;

* In former times it was the custom all over Scotland for the housewife, assisted by her servants, and, in the case of a laird, by the wives and daughters of the tenantry, to spin as much woollen and linen yarn as sufficed to furnish clothes for her family, and napery for bed and board ; a weaver being alone employed, besides, to put her handiwork into proper shape. Not long ago, a humble street in Edinburgh, called the Netherbow, was full of weavers of this kind ; and as a proof of the extent to which the custom was carried two hundred years ago, even in the capital, I may mention that, when the Scottish Covenanters were about to invade England in 1640, the pious "wives" of Edinburgh supplied them at a day's notice with a quantity of *harden*, a species of linen cloth, sufficient to furnish tents to the whole army, amounting to twenty thousand men.

In the present improved state of Scotland, the division-of-labour system has in a great measure banished both the "big" and the "little" wheel ; and, accordingly, there are not nearly so many weavers employed throughout the country, as used to be, in preparing the cloth. Still, however, where such an individual is found, he is generally a more comfortable person than the muslin or cotton weaver, who, in his labour, has to compete against the enormous odds of machinery, and is therefore perhaps the most abject and impoverished workman in the empire. Unfortunately, there are now very few *customer weavers*, as they are called, who can obtain full employment, and, therefore, their existence is generally found to be one of comfort, chequered with intervals of penury.

Yet cany 's the wabster, and blyth as a lark,
Whene'er he gets what he ca's customer-wark !

II.

This customer-wark 's the delight o' his soul,
Whether blanket, or sheetin, or sarkin, or towel :
Nae trashtrie o' cottons frae Glasgow he cares for,—
Their twopence the ell is a very good wherefore ;
But God bless the wives, wi' their wheels and their thrift,
That help the puir wabster to fend and mak shift ;
Himsel, and his wife, and his weans might been stark,
An it hadna been them and their customer-wark.

III.

The wabster's auld house, it 's an unco like den,
Though, atweel, like its neebors, it has a ben-cu' ;
Its roof 's just a hotter o' divots and thack,
Wi' a chimley dress'd up maist as big 's a wheat-stack.
There 's a peat-ruck behind, and a midden before,
And a jaw-hole would tak' a mile-race to jump o'er !
Ye may think him neglectfu' and lazy,—but hark,
He 's eydent eneuch at the customer-wark !

IV.

Whate'er ye may think him,—the wabster's auld hut,
Has twa looms i' the ben, and twa beds i' the but,
A table, twa creepies, three chyres, and a kist,
And a settle to rest on whene'er that ye list ;

The ben has a winnock, the but has a bole,
 Where the bairns' parritch-luggies are set out to cool,
 In providin' o' whilk he has mony a day's darque
 O' saxteen lang hours, at the customer-wark !

V.

The wabster's auld madam—her name it is Bell,—
 Lang, ill-faured, and black, like the wabster himsel—
 She does nought the haill day but keeps skelpin' the bairns,
 And hauds three or four o' them tight at the pirms.
 Her tongue is as gleg and as sharp as a shuttle,
 Whilk seldom but gies her the best o' the battle ;
 And sometimes her neive lends the wabster a yerck,
 That he likesna sac weel as his customer-wark !

VI.

The black cutty-pipe, that lies by the fire-side,
 Weel kens it the day when a wab has been paid,
 For then wi' tobacco it 's filled to the ee,
 And the wabster sits happy as happy can be ;
 For hours at a time it 's ne'er out o' his cheek,
 Till maist feck o' his winnings hae vanished in reek :
 He says that o' life he could ne'er keep the spark,
 An it werena the pipe and the customer-wark !

VII.

Then the wife, that 's as foud o' her pleasure as he,
 Brings out a black teapot and masks a drap tea ;

And they sit, and they soss, and they haud a cabal,
 Till ye think that their slaistrie wad never divaul.
 By their wee spunk o' ingle they keep up the bother,
 Each jeerin', misca'in', and scaldin' the tother ;
 While the bairns sit out by, wi' cauld kale, i' the dark—
 Nae gude comes to them o' the customer-wark !

VIII.

When the siller grows scarce, and the spleuchan gets toom,
 The wabster gangs back to his treddles and loom,
 Where he jows the day lang on some wab o' his ain,
 That 'll bring in nae cash for a twalmonth or twain ;
 Then the pipe is exhaustit and laid on the sill,
 Though the fumes o' its sweetness will hang round it still,
 And the tea-pot man lie like a yaud in a park,
 Till Heaven shall neist send some customer-wark !

IX.

Then the pair starvin' wabster grows thinner and thinner,
 On a 'tatoe for breakfast, a 'tatoe for dinner,
 And vanishes veesibly, day after day,
 Just like the auld moon when she celies away.
 Clean purged out he looks, like a worm amang fog,
 And his fae like a clatch o' auld sweens in a cogne.
 At last, when grown hungry and gaunt as a shark,
 He revives wi' a mouthfu' o' customer-wark !

X.

A brauksome gudewife, frae the neist farmer toun,
 Comes in wi' a bundle, and clanks hersel down,
 "How 's a' wi' ye the day, Bell? Hae ye ought i' the pipe?
 Come, rax me a stapper, the cutty I'll rype!
 I maun see the gudeman—bring him ben, hinney Jess!
 Tut! the pipe 's fu' o' naething but fizenless asse!"
 The wife ne'er lets on that she hears the remark,
 But cries, "Jess! do ye hear, deme?—*it's customer-wark!*"

XI.

Having gotten her lick i' the lug, Jess gangs ben,
 And tells her toom father about the God-sen';
 Transported, he through the shop-door pops his head,
 Like a ghaist glowrin' out frae the gates o' the dead.
 Then, wi' a great fraise he salutes the gudewife,
 Says he ne'er saw her lookin' sae weel i' his life,
 Spiers for the gudeman and the bairns at Glendeark,
 While his thoughts a' the time are on customer-wark!

XII.

Then, wi' the gudewife, he claps down on the floor,
 And they turn and they count the haill yarn o'er and o'er:
 He rooses her spinning, but canyells like daft
 'Bout the length o' her warp and the serimp o' her waft.
 At last it 's a' settled, and promised bedeen
 To be ready on Friday or Fuirsday at e'en;

And the bairns they rin out, wi' a great skirlin' bark,
To tell that their dad 's got some customer-wark !

XIII.

Then it 's pleasant to see, by the vera neist ouk,
How the wabster thowes out to his natural bouk,
How he freshens a thought on his diet o' brose,
And a wee tait o' colour comes back to his nose !
The cutty 's new mountit, and every thing 's snug,
And Bell's tongue disna sing half sac loud i' his lug ;
Contented, and happy, and jum as a Turk,
He sits thinking on naething but customer-wark !

XIV.

Oh, customer-wark ! thou sublime moving spring !
It 's you gars the heart o' the wabster to sing !
An 'twere na for you, how puir were his cheer,
Ae meltith a day, and twa blasts i' the year :
It 's you that provides him the bit, brat, and beet,
And maks the twa ends o' the year sweetly meet,
That pits meat in his barrel, and meal in his ark—
My blessings gang wi' ye, dear customer wark !

PARAPHRASE

OF THE FIRST ODE OF THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE
ODES OF HORACE.

*Intermissa, Venus, diu rursus bella moves?
Parce, precor, precor——*

Once more, enchantress, wilt thou try
Thoughts long subdued to move—
Cease, cease, I pray, nor think that I
Again can ever love.

What once I was I am not now,
Nor e'er shall be again,
Since years have left upon my brow
Their tracks of grief and pain.

Go to the youth whose hourly prayers
Are breathed before thy shrine,
And leave to its austerer cares
This sullen heart of mine.

I see thee in the mazy dance
To witching measures move,
I feel the lightning of thy glance—
Yet cannot, cannot love.

Nor, though I might, could love avail
 To chain the flying hours?—
 As pulses in our temples fail,
 Though wreathed around with flowers.

Age now advances,—loveless, vile,
 Cold, torpid, and severe,—
 When pleasure yields no grateful smile,
 Pain no relieving tear.

1825.

MALLY LEE.*

As Mally Lee came down the street, her capuchin did flee;
 She euid a look behind her, to see her negligee.

And we're a' gaun east and west, we're a' gaun aje,
 We're a' gaun east and west, courting Mally Lee.

She had lappets at her head that flaunted gallantlie,
 And ribbon-knots at back and breast of bonnie Mally Lee.

And we're a' gaun, &c.

* The first verse of this ballad is the commencement of a song of the eighteenth century, which I have seen in a manuscript collection. The name, however, has been changed from Sleigh. Allan Ramsay has a poem addressed to the Lord Lyon Brodie, on his marriage, in 1724, with Mrs. Mally Sleigh; in whose honour the original manuscript song seems to have been composed. In the above ballad an attempt is made, by references to costume, and other circumstances, to awaken associations respecting Edinburgh in the year 1745.

A' doun along the Canongate were beaux o' ilk degree,
 And mony ane turned round to look at bonnie Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

And ilka bab her pompoon gied, ilk lad thocht that's to me ;
 But ne'er a ane was in the thocht o' bonnie Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

Frae Seton's land a countess fair looked ower a window hie,
 And pined to see the genty shape o' bonnie Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

And when she reached the Palace Porch, she met wi' yerls three,
 And ilk ane thocht his Kate or Meg a drab to Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

The dance gaed through the Palace ha', a comely sicht to see,
 But nane was there sae bricht or braw as bonnie Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

Though some had jewels in their hair, like stars 'mang cluds did shine,
 Yet Mally far surpassed them a' wi' but her glancing eyne.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

A prince cam out frae 'mang them a', wi' garter at his knee,
 And danced a stately minuet wi' bonnie Mally Lee.
 And we're a' gaun, &c.

THE LADYE THAT I LOVE.

Were I a doughty cavalier,
On fire for high-born dame,
With sword and lance I would not fear
To win a warrior's fame :
But since no more stern deeds of blood
The gentle fair may move,
I'll woo in softer, better mood
The ladye that I love.

For helmet bright with steel and gold,
And plumes that flout the sky,
I'll wear a soul of hardier mould,
And thoughts that sweep as high ;
For scarf athwart my corslet cast,
With her fair name y-wove,
I'll have her pictured in my breast,
The ladye that I love.

No crested steed through battle throng
Shall bear me bravely on,
But pride shall make my spirit strong,
Where honours may be won :

Amidst the great of mind and heart,
My prowess I will prove,
And thus I'll win by gentler art
The ladye that I love.

1825.

TO THE BELL-ROCK LIGHT-HOUSE.

Strange fancies rise at sight of thee,
Tower of the dim and silent sea.
Art thou a thing of earth or sky,
Upshot from beneath, or let down from on high,
A thing of the wave, or a thing of the cloud,
The work of man, or the work of God?
Old art thou—has thy blue minaret
Seen the young suns of creation set?
Or did but the yester years of time
Wake their old eyes on thy youthful prime,
Object of mystery sublime?

Strange are thy purposes and fate,
Emblem of all that 's desolate.
Outcast of earth, as if cursed and exiled,
Thou hast taken thy place on the ocean wild,
And rear'st, like a mournful repentant Cain,
Thy conscious and flame-lettered brow on the main,

Telling all who might come to companion and cheer,
To shun thy abode of destruction and fear !

Hermit of the waste of sea,
Loneliest of all things that be,
The pillared fanatic was nothing to thee !
In calm and in sunshine, in gloom and in storm,
Thy constancy shrinks not, nor changes thy form ;
Morn breaks on thy head with a blush and a smile,
Noon pours all his splendours around thy lone pile ;
The long level sunbeams that gild thee at eve,
Cast thy shade till 'tis lost o'er the far German wave ;
Or night falls upon thee, as dew falls on tree—
Yet these alternations no change bring to thee.
Let the sea, as the heaven which it mirrors, be calm,
And each breath of the breeze bring its own load of balm ;
Or let this bleak pavement be traversed and torn
By those white-crested war-waves, on north westers borne,
That seem, as they rush to old Albany's strand,
A new troop of Norsemen invading the land ;
Or let the rough mood of this long-trooping host
In the madder conflict of the tempest be lost,
And to the wild scene deepest darkness be given,
Save where God pours his fire through the shot-holes of heaven,
In calm and in breeze, amidst tempest and flame,
Thou art still the same beautiful, terrible same !

1826.

TO SCOTLAND.

SCOTLAND! the land of all I love,
The land of all that love me ;
Land, whose green sod my youth has trod,
Whose sod shall lie above me !
Hail, country of the brave and good,
Hail, land of song and story ;
Land of the uncorrupted heart,
Of ancient faith and glory !

Like mother's bosom o'er her child,
Thy sky is glowing o'er me ;
Like mother's ever smiling face,
Thy land lies bright before me.
Land of my home, my father's land,
Land where my soul was nourished ;
Land of anticipated joy,
And all by memory cherish'd !

Oh, Scotland, through thy wide domain,
What hill, or vale, or river,
But in this fond enthusiast heart
Has found a place for ever ?
Nay, hast thou but a glen or shaw,
To shelter farm or shealing,
That is not garner'd fondly up,
Within its depths of feeling ?

Adown thy hills run countless rills,
With noisy, ceaseless motion ;
Their waters join the rivers broad,
Those rivers join the ocean :
And many a sunny, flowery brae,
Where childhood plays and ponders,
Is freshened by the lightsome flood,
As wimpling on it wanders.

Within thy long-descending vales,
And on the lonely mountain,
How many wild spontaneous flowers
Hang o'er each flood and fountain !
The glowing furze—the “ bonny broom,”
The thistle, and the heather ;
The blue bell, and the gowan fair,
Which childhood loves to gather.

Oh, for that pipe of silver sound,
On which the shepherd lover,
In ancient days, breathed out his soul,
Beneath the mountain's cover !
Oh, for that Great Lost Power of Song,
So soft and melancholy,
To make thy every hill and dale
Poetically holy !

And not alone each hill and dale,
Fair as they are by nature,

But every town and tower of thine,
And every lesser feature ;
For where is there the spot of earth,
Within my contemplation,
But from some noble deed or thing
Has taken consecration ?

First, I could sing how brave thy sons,
How pious and true-hearted,
Who saved a bloody heritage
For us in times departed ;
Who, through a thousand years of wrong,
Oppressed and disrespected,
Ever the generous, righteous cause
Religiously protected.

I'd sing of that old early time,
When came the victor Roman,
And, for the first time, found in them
Uncompromising foemen ;
When that proud bird, which never stooped
To foe, however fiery,
Met eagles of a sterner brood
In this our northern eyry.

Next, of that better glorious time,
When thy own patriot Wallace
Repell'd and smote the myriad foe
Which stormed thy mountain palace ;

When on the sward of Bannockburn
De Bruce his standard planted,
And drove the proud Plantagenet
Before him, pale and daunted.

Next, how, through ages of despair,
Thou brav'dst the English banner,
Fighting like one who hopes to save
No valued thing but honour.
How thy own young and knightly kings,
And their fair hapless daughter,
Left but a tale of broken hearts
To vary that of slaughter.

How, in a later, darker time,
When wicked men were reigning,
Thy sons went to the wilderness,
All but their God disdaining ;
There, hopeful only of the grave,
To stand through morn and even,
Where all on earth was black despair,
And nothing bright but heaven.

And, later still, when times were changed,
And tend'rer thoughts came o'er thee,
When abject, suppliant, and poor,
Thy Injurer came before thee,

How thou did'st freely all forgive,
Thy heart and sword presented,
Although thou knew'st the deed must be
In tears of blood repented.

Scotland! the land of all I love,
The land of all that love me ;
Land, whose green sod my youth has trod,
Whose sod shall lie above me ;
Hail! country of the brave and good,
Hail! land of song and story,
Land of the uncorrupted heart,
Of ancient faith and glory!

1826.

OH, MAID UNLOVING.

Oh, maid unloving, but beloved,
My soul's unchanging theme,
Who art by day my only thought,
By night my only dream ;
Thou think'st not, in thy pride of place,
When gay ones bow the knee,
How bends one lonely distant heart,
In earnest love of thee.

As ancient worshippers but knew
One attitude of prayer,

And, turning to the holy east,
 Pour all their spirit there ;
 So to thy home inclines this heart,
 All distant though it be,
 And knows but one adoring art,
 An earnest love of thee.

1826.

THE BLUFF MUTTONEER.

Tantus amor *ovis* atque gloria.

VIRG.

[This jen-d'esprit took its rise in the jocularity of a friend, who describes a tribe of middle-aged well-conditioned bon-vivant bachelors as *muttoncers*, from an idea of their being generally much attached to boiled mutton, and constantly going about seeking what they may devour of that article of food.]

You may talk of your dandies, your bloods, and fine fellows,
 And of all the gay creatures of Princes' street tell us ;
 But in my estimation there's none that can peer
 With that jolly good fellow, the bluff Muttoneer.
 Derry down, down, down derry down.

The bluff Muttoneer ! would you have him before ye,
 In all his majestic proportions and glory ?
 Do you wish that the genuine man should appear ?
 Then look, and I'll show you the bluff Muttoneer.
 Derry down, &c.

More sturdy than tall, to the fat just inclining ;
 A belly whose jet shows some good capon lining ;
 A swell derriere, over which dangle clear
 The ganey coat-tails of the bluff Muttoncer.

Derry down, &c.

A visage as broad and as bright as the moon,
 When she rises in autumn nine nights alike soon ;
 And, like her when half-risen, half-hid, you would swear,
 In the web round the neck of the bluff Muttoncer.

Derry down, &c.

A hat o'er this visage cocks somewhat ajce,
 As it was in the year eighteen hundred and three ;
 A mouth for a jeer and an eye for a leer,
 And a cane in the hand of the bluff Muttoncer.

Derry down, &c.

And then of the causeway he walks on the crown,
 With a sough on the air, would knock ony man down ;
 My faith, ye had better take care how ye steer,
 When ye come near the track of the bluff Muttoncer.

Derry down, &c.

For every thing's big 'bout this wonderful blade,
 His look is a stare, and his voice a cascade ;
 Ye had better shake hands wi' a Spitzbergen bear,
 Or with a smith's vice, than a bluff Muttoncer.

Derry down, &c.

Yet the bluff Muttoneer has his softnesses too ;
 To the friends of his heart he's both kindly and true ;
 That he still likes " the gi'ls," too, he sometimes will swear,
 Though it's all to no good with the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

On port, now, and mutton are placed his affections,
 And for meaner things he has few predilections,—
 Except 'twere a walk to the end of Leith pier,
 Just to sharpen the teeth of the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

Should you ask him to dine, yet, forgetting his taste,
 Give him only some kickshaws surrounded with paste ;
 Alas, my good friend, they'd be viewed with a sneer,
 Being nought in the hands of a bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

You must have a good gigot—be sure it's a wether—
 Five-year-old—Teviot fed—and a smack of the heather—
 A glass of good sherry—a glass of good beer—
 Then port at the will of the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

See him planted at table with knife and with fork,
 With what practised expertness he gets through his work ?
 How he knows when the moment of gorging is near,
 And fills to a hair breadth—the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

With what constitutional horror he sees
 Fellows keeping a corner for pancakes or cheese !
 Such vile disregard of the principal cheer
 Seems treason—or worse—to the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

After dinner he talks of some Jockey Club case,
 Or what yesternight at the *Shakie** took place !
 Or he sings them a song with his whistle so clear,
 “ If they’ll join in the chorus”—the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

His songs are the songs of his own early day,
 “ Dear Tom, this brown jug,” or, “ In Trafalgar Bay,”
 Such things as “ Young Love,” or the “ Calm Bendmeer,”
 Are all tol de rol lol with the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

When at nine the *young men* make a move from their chairs,
 And say something ’bout joining the ladies up stairs,
 He gives them a look that their livers might spear,
 And “ the more I wo’nt come,” thinks the bluff Muttoneer.

Derry down, &c.

* A *house* which formerly existed under the name of Shakspeare’s Tavern, near the Theatre-Royal, Edinburgh—a great *house*

—“ in the year eighteen hundred and three.”

At length when the time has roll'd on to eleven,
 He ends with a glee—" To Anacreon in Heaven ;"
 And, beginning to feel rather muzzy and queer,
 Home staggers in glory the bluff Muttoneer !
 Derry down, &c.

1827.

YOUNG RANDAL,

A BALLAD.

Young Randal was a bonnie lad, when he gaed awa,
 Young Randal was a bonnie lad, when he gaed awa ;
 'Twas in the sixteen hunder year o' grace and thretty twa,
 That Randal, the laird's youngest son, gaed awa.

It was to seek his fortune in the High Germanie,
 To fecht the foreign loons in the High Germanie,
 That he left his father's tower o' sweet Willanslee,
 And mony wae friends i' the North Countrie.

He left his mother in her bower, his father in the ha',
 His brother at the outer yett, but and his sisters twa,
 And his bonny cousin Jean, that looked owre the castle wa',
 And, mair than a' the lave, loot the tears down fa'.

" Oh, whan will ye be back ?" sae kindly did she spier,
 " Oh, whan will ye be back, my hinny and my dear ?"
 " Whenever I can win enench o' Spanish gear,
 To dress ye out in pearlins and silks, my dear.

Oh, Randal's hair was coal black, when he gaed awa,
 Oh, Randal's cheeks were roses red, when he gaed awa,
 And in his bonnie ee, a spark glintit high,
 Like the merrie, merrie lark, in the morning sky.

Oh, Randal was an alert man when he came hame,
 A sair alert man was he, when he came hame,
 Wi' a ribbon at his breast, and a *sir* at his name,
 And grey, grey cheeks, did Randal come hame.

He lichtit at the outer yett, and rispit wi' the ring,
 And down came a ladye to see him come in,
 And after the ladye came bairns feifteen—
 "Can this muckle wife be my true love, Jean?"

"Whatna stoure carl is this," quo the dame;
 "Sae gruff and sae grand, and sae feckless and sae lame?"
 "Oh, tell me, fair madam, are ye bonnie Jeanie Grahame?"
 "In troth," quo the layde, "sweet sir, the very same."

He turned him about, wi' a waeftul ee.
 And a heart as sair as sair could be;
 He lap on his horse, and awa did wildly flee,
 And never mair came back to sweet Willanslee.

Oh, dule on the purtith o' this countrie,
 And dule on the wars o' the high Germanie,
 And dule on the love that forgetfu' can be—
 For they've wrecked the bravest heart in this hale countrie!

LAMENTE FOR THE AULD HOSTELS.

"Oh Edinbruch, lich and triumphand toun,
 Within thy bounds rycht merrie haif I bene!"
 Sae said Schir David Lyndsay, that slie loun,
 Wha kenned what merrines wes rycht weil, I wene;
 And sae say I, that monie a bouse haif sene,
 In quyet houses round about the Croce
 (Haplie now herboure for the vyle and meane,)
 In the Hie Streit, or als in wynde or closse,
 Renowned for punche and aill, and eke hie-relished soss.

But now, alas for thee, decaivit Dunedin,
 Thy dayis of glory are depairtit quite;
 For all those places that we ance were fed in,
 And where we decently gotte foue o' night,
 Those havyns of douce comforte and delighe,
 Are closed, degraded, burnt, or changed, or gone,
 Whyle our old hostesses have ta'en their flight,
 To far off places, novel and unknowne,
 About whose verie names we skairslie may depone.

Whair now is Douglas's? whair Clerihugh's?
 Whair is John's Coffee-house? and tell me whair
 Is Mistress P * * * 's? to which, when these old shoes
 Were new, at eight we used to make repair;

By her own ladye hand showne up the staire,
 Through a long trance, into a panyled roome
 Whair lords had erst held feist wyth ladyes faire,
 And which had still an air of lordly gloome,
 That scarss two sturdie mouldes colde utterlie illumme.

Oh for the pen of Fergusson to painte
 "The parloure splendours of that festyf place!"
 The niche, sumtyme the shrine of sum old sainte,
 The ceilyng that still bore, in antique grace,
 Many a holye, chubby, white-washt face;
 The dark-brown landscape, done of old by Norie,
 On the broad panel o'er the chimney-brace;
 The blue-tiled fire-place gleamyng in its glorye,
 Relating, verse for verse, sum morall scrypture storye.

Then on the wall was hung that rare and rych
 Memoriall of a tyme and mode gone by,
 The *samplar*, showing every kind of stitch
 E'er known or practised underneath the skye—
 Thread-circled holes denominated "pye"—
 Embattled lynes—of squayr-tayled lambs a paire—
 Strange cloven-footed letters awkwardlye
 Contriving to make up the Lorde hys prayer—
 And names of John and Jean and William all were thair.

Thair, also, hung around the wainscot wall,
 Eche in its panel, of old prynts a store;

Adam in paradyce before the Falle ;
 The sailours mutinying at the Nore ;
 Flora—Pomona—and the Sesons four ;
 Lord Nelson's victory at Trafalgar ;
 The deth of Cooke on Otaheite's shore ;
 Lord North rigged out in gartyr and in star ;
 With manie more ta'en out of Historie of the Warre.

Then thair were tablis, also, squayr and round,
 Derke as the face of old antiquity,
 Yet, when inspected, each a mirror found,
 So that ilke feature you full well could spye ;
 The jugges and glasses on those planes did lye,
 Lyke summer barkes in glassye seas reflected ;
 And chayrs were thair, as vertical and high
 As the proude race upoun them once erected,
 In each of whome, 'tis sayd, ane pokyr was injected.

But ah the mere externe of this olde haunte—
 Preciouse althoughe in every lineamente—
 Wes the leaste worthie subject of descante ;
 The sorrow which mine anxious muse wolde vent,
 Regards alone the happy moments, spente
 Sae cozie, within that humble dome,
 In nights of other years—jocoseness blente
 With courtesie—the decencies of home—
 Yet o'er the realmes of talke for ever frie to roame.

To me who love the olde with such regrette,
 What charme can be apparent in the newe :
 Divans, saloons, and cafés may besette
 The heartes of youth, and seem to faneye's viewe
 Places more fit to lounge in, while the stewe
 Of numbers has a charme ; but oh how far
 From hearty is the pleasance they pursue—
 Eche manne his single rummyr and cigarre,
 Puffing, all by himself—a sulky, smoky warre !

Bot vayne it is to sorrow for the paste—
 Dunedin stands not now quhair once it stooode :
 Ilke thing of old is hastenyng from it faste,
 And brydges it must haif, althoeh no floode ;
 The auld wes cozie, and the auld wes goode,
 And Mistress P—— of hosteleres wes the quene ;
 Bot dinging down is now the reigning moode,
 And auld-toun hostels are extynguyshed elene—
 I haif, in troth, ane end of al perfectioun sene.*

1828.

*When some one made enquiry of Naise Tinnock of Mauchline respecting the convivial habits of Robert Burns—which, it was presumed, she must have had the best opportunities of observing—the old lady answered that she really could say little upon the subject, “as the chield had hardly ever drunk twa half-mutchkins in her house.” If any one presume, from the above poem, that the author must have been well acquainted, personally, with the taverns of ancient Edinburgh, and entered largely into the festivities practised in them, a mistake will be committed, not less than that of the individual who applied to the Mauchline hostess for the bacchanalian character of Burns. He has only once

SONNET TO LADY D——.

Lady, thou wert not formed for this cold clime,
 Nor for this tame and unchivalric age ;
 Thou'rt all misplaced upon this humble stage,
 Thou hast come to the world *behind* thy time.
 Thou should'st have lived five hundred years ago,
 In some lone castle near the proud Garonne,
 With such concourse of lovers from all Spain,
 That towns at length should rise on thy domain ;
 Kings should come there to break their hearts in scores,
 And thou should'st hold a massacre of knights
 Once every week, until the river's shores
 Should peopled be with their untimely sprites.
 Thou should'st lay waste a kingdom with thy charms,
 And yield to none but Death's *all*-conquering arms.

1829.

LOVE OVER-HEAD.

Some people say they nothing love
 In woman, save the sacred mind,

or twice, by chance, seen such scenes as those here described. As a further illustration of the fallacy of reasoning from print to its author, it occurs to him, that, notwithstanding the minute information given in the Traditions of Edinburgh regarding clubs, he never, up to that time, and for some years later, happened to be once present at the meeting of any such fraternity.

Pretending, in her boasted form,
 No charm or merit they can find.

Others—and this is Thomson's school—
 Are all for beauty unadorned,
 Caring small things, 'twould seem, for soul,
 And holding dress but to be scorned,

Away with all such saving clauses !
 I love my Julia altogether,
 From soul within to silk without,
 From point of toe to top of feather.

Her dear idea is to me
 One lustrous silhouette of light,
 Where every edge of lace and frill
 Is as the inmost core as bright.

For instance, now, I love her eyes,
 So dark, yet dove-like in expression ;
 Yet to the pendants at her ears,
My eyes will sometimes make digression.

Her cheeks are like the roses red,
 Her mouth is like the parted cherry ;
 But don't these combs become her much ?
 Are they not charming ? yes, oh very !

Her head moves with a queenly grace ;
A crown would not look queer upon it :
But, in the meantime, is not this
A very tasteful sort of bonnet ?

Her hands are soft and paly white,
Her fingers tapering, small, and seemly ;
But oh her bracelets and her gloves,
I love them, love them most extremely.

Her feet so gentle are and small,
They give a grace to shoe and stocking ;
Shoe, stocking, foot—'tis but one thing,
That sets this foolish heart a-knocking.

I am of Hudibras's thought,
Who looked on't as a sort of duty,
While he admired his fair one's face,
T'adore the shade even of her shoe-tye.

I wear a tassel from her gown,
Snug near my heart in left vest-pocket ;
I have a ringlet of her hair,
Hung not more near it in a locket.

Her parasol, that from the sun
Protects her roscate complexion,
I don't know which I love the most,
The thing that takes, or gives protection.

The thrilling music of her voice
Puts all my senses in a tussle ;
And every nerve springs up to hear
Her distant bombazines play rustle.

Whate'er she does, whate'er she says,
For good, indifferent, or ill,
'Tis all one luxury to my soul,
'Tis Julia yet, 'tis Julia still.

Say that she talks of mutual love,
And puts her poor swain in a rapture ;
Say that she tells her kitchen-maid
To make in poultry-yard a capture ;

Say that she reads some touching tale,
That gems with tears her soft eye-lashes ;
Say that she pities but the scribe
Whom some fell critic cuts and slashes ;

'Tis all one thing—mind, person, dress—
The formed of heaven, or dust, or shears—
I love the whole and nothing less,
I love her over-head—and ears.

THOU GENTLE AND KIND ONE.

Thou gentle and kind one,
Who com'st o'er my dreams,
Like the gales of the west,
Or the music of streams ;
Oh softest and dearest,
Can that time e'er be,
When I could be forgetful
Or scornful of thee ?

No ! my soul might be dark,
Like a landscape in shade,
And for thee not the half
Of its love be display'd,
But one ray of thy kindness
Would banish my pain,
And soon kiss every feature
To brightness again.

And, if, in contending
With men and the world,
My eye might be fierce
Or my brow might be curl'd ;
That brow on thy bosom
All smoothed would recline,
And that eye melt in kindness,
When turned upon thine.

If faithful in sorrow
 More faithful in joy,—
 Thou should'st find that no change
 Could affection destroy ;
 All profit, all pleasure
 As nothing would be,
 And each triumph despised,
 Unpartaken by thee.

July, 1829.

ON AN EDITION OF HERRICK'S SELECT
 POEMS.

BEING AN IMITATION OF THE MANNER OF THAT POET.

A tiny tome, such as might lie
 In Mistress Mab's own library ;
 With boards of rose and leaves of cream,
 And little print that might beseech
 The foot-marks of the fairy throng,
 As o'er a snow-charged leaf they lightly tripped along.

Oh if to Herrick's sainted mind
 Aught earthly now its way can find,
 Be this sweet book-flower softly shed,
 By fays, upon his last green bed,

'Twill mind him of those things he loved,
 When he the sweet-breathed country roved ;
 Inside he'll find his own pure lilies,
 Outside his golden daffodillies ;
 On every leaf some lovesome thing
 Back to his shade life's thoughts will bring.
 Here Phillis with her pastoral messes,
 And Julia with her witching dresses ;
 There daisies from a hundred hills,
 And crystal from a thousand rills,
 (Rills whose every tinkling fall
 With nightingales is musical ;)
 And posies all around beset
 With primrose and rich violet ;
 And robes beneath the cestus thrown
 Into a fine distraction ;
 And ladies' lips, which sweetly smile,
 Among the groves of Cherry Isle.

1830.

SUMMER EVENING,

AN ANGLO-SCOTTISH VERSION OF A PASSAGE IN GAVIN

DOUGLAS.

'Twas in the jolly joyous month of June,
 When gane was near the day and supper dunc,
 I walkit furth to taste the evening air,
 Among the fields that were replenished fair

With herbage, corn, and cattle, and fruit trees,
Plenty of store ; while birds and busy bees
O'er emerald meadows flew baith east and west,
Their labour done, to take their evening rest.
As up and down I cast my wandering eye,
All burning red straight grew the western sky ;
The sun, descending on the waters gray,
Deep under earth withdrew his beams away ;
The evening star, with growing lustre bright,
Sprung up, the gay fore-rider of the night ;
Amid the haughs and every pleasant vale,
The recent dew began on herbs to skail ;
The light began to dim, and mists to rise,
And here and there grim shades o'erspread the skies ;
The bald and leathern bat commenced her flight,
The lark descended from her airy height ;
Mists swept the hill before the lazy wind,
And night spread out her cloak with sable lined,
Swaddling the beauty of the fruitful ground
With cloth of shade, obscurity profound.
All creatures, wheresoever they liked the best,
Then went to take their pleasant nightly rest.
The fowls that lately wantoned in the air,
The drowsy cattle in their sheltered lair,
After the heat and labour of the day,
Unstirring and unstirred in slumber lay.
Each thing that roves the meadow or the wood,
Each thing that flies through air or dives in flood,

Each thing that nestles in the bosky bank,
 Or loves to rustle through the marshes dank,
 The little midges and the happy flees,
 Laborious emmets, and the busy bees,
 All beasts, or wild or tame, or great or small,
 Night's peace and blessing rests serene o'er all.

1832.

SONNET.

Like precious caskets in the deep sea casten,
 On which the clustering shell-fish quickly fasten,
 Till closed they seem in chinkless panoplie ;
 So do our hearts, into this world's moil thrown,
 Become with self's vile crust straight overgrown,
 Of which there scarce may any breaking be.
 So may not mine, though quicksetted all round
 With sternest cares : still for the young departed,
 And more for the surviving broken-hearted,
 For all who sink beneath affliction's wound,
 May I at least some grief or pity feel :
 Still let my country and my kindred's name,
 Still let religion's mild and tender flame,
 Have power to move : I would not all be steel.

1833.

THE NOOK.

Iste terrarum mihi, præter omnes,
 Angulus ridet.

HOR.

[Written during a visit at the Nook, near Airth, Stirlingshire.]

One thing seems agreed on in speech and in book,
 That, if comfort exists, 'twill be found in a nook ;
 All seems dreary and cold in an open area,
 But a corner—how charming the very idea !
 Hence, when, weary with toiling, we think of retreat,
 A nook is the spot that we ask for our seat—
 Some small piece of earth, 'tis no matter how small,
 But a corner it must be, or nothing at all.
 The poor man an object of kindred desire
 Regards, in the nook of his bright evening fire,
 Where, his labours all done, he may sit at his ease,
 With his wee things devoutly caressing his knees,
 And where, I would know, to what promising shade,
 Runs the kiss-threatened, bashful, yet half-willing maid ?
 To some nook, to be sure, to some hidden recess,
 Where her lover his fondness is free to confess.
 Even less might have been the delight of Jack Horner,
 Had his plums been enjoyed anywhere but a corner !

Since thus open pleasures are viler than tangle,
 And true ones, like trout, must be caught by the angle.

Perfect joy, it seems clear, must by hook or by crook,
 Be obtained in a place called, *par excellence*, Nook.
 The Nook!—how endearing and pleasant the word—
 As biely and warm as the nest of a bird!
 Sure a place so designed must know little of care,
 And summer must linger eternally there;
 No resting-place, surely, for sorrow or sin,
 But all blossom without and all pleasure within:
 There children must sport, all unknowing of pain,
 And old folk, looking on, become children again.
 Sad Poortith will pass it ungrudgingly by,
 And Wealth only cast a solicitous eye.
 'Twere surely fit scene for a Goddess' descent—
 The goddess long lost to us—holy Content.

Such thoughts it is easy to string up together;
 But reason might smash them perhaps with a feather,
 And things might be in such a concatenation,
 That the Nook might become quite a scene of vexation.
 Yet of this, as it happens, there's no chance or little,
 Unless, like the small-pox, vexation turns smittle;
 For here lives good ———, the blythest and best,
 Who is happy himself and makes happy the rest,
 Whose temper is such, as he proves by his look,
 That joy would be with him, *even not in a nook*;
 Who has wit for all topics, and worth with it all,
 And, while mirth is in presence, keeps Sense within call.
 To the Nook, why, a man such as this is as pat,
 As the foot to the shoe, or the head to the hat;

And so well do they answer to each other's quality,
 So mixed is the man with his pleasant locality,
 That a question it seems, and I cannot decide it,
 Whether he or the Nook gives the most of the "ridet."

October, 1834.

LAMENT

FOR THE OLD HIGHLAND WARRIORS.

AIR—*Cro Challein*.*

Oh, where are the pretty men of yore,
 Oh, where are the brave men gone,
 Oh, where are the heroes of the north?
 Each under his own grey stone.
 Oh, where now the broad bright claymore,
 Oh, where are the truis and plaid?
 Oh, where now the merry Highland heart?
 In silence for ever laid.

Och on a rie, och on a rie,
 Och on a rie, all are gone,
 Och on a rie, the heroes of yore,
 Each under his own grey stone.

* *Cro Challein* is the name of a remarkably mournful Highland song, which, according to tradition, originated with the spirit of a farmer's wife, who was heard singing it to her husband's cattle some months after her death. The air is to be found in "A Selection of Celtic Melodies," Edinburgh, Purdie, 1830.

The chiefs that were foremost of old,
Macdonald and brave Lochiel,
The Gordon, the Murray, and the Graham,
With their clansmen true as steel ;
Who followed and fought with Montrose,
Glencairn, and bold Dundee,
Who to Charlie gave their swords and their all,
And would ay rather fa' than fie—

Och on a rie, och on a rie,
Och on a rie, all are gone,
Och on a rie, the heroes of yore,
Each under his own grey stone.

The hills that our brave fathers trod,
Are now to the stranger a store ;
The voice of the pipe and the bard
Shall awaken never more.
Such things it is sad to think on,—
They come like the mist by day,—
And I wish I had less in this world to leave,
And be with them that are away.

Och on a rie, och on a rie,
Och on a rie, all are gone,
Och on a rie, the heroes of yore,
Each under his own grey stone.

January, 1835.



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